Met Office

December 2005

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Mean temperatures ranging from below average across parts of southern England, to above average across Northern Ireland and Scotland. The majority of the UK recorded below-average rainfall. Well above average sunshine across England & Wales, but closer to average across Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Aviemore recorded a temperature of -12.8 °C on the 29th. Boltshope Park (Durham) recorded 13 cm of snow lying at 12 UTC on the 28th.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Unsettled and mild at first. Briefly colder mid-month with some wintry showers in the east. Much colder late in the month with some substantial snowfall in eastern England 27th to 30th.

1st to 6th: It was an unsettled first week to the month with temperatures close to normal. Strong southerly winds on the 1st gave a gust of 62 knots at Brixham (Devon) and western parts had some heavy rain. Low pressure dominated the weather through to the 6th. A deep depression moved into the south-west on the 2nd, central pressure 960 hPa at midday and the wind gusted to 69 knots on the Isle of Portland (Dorset) and 63 knots at Brixham (Devon). Bands of rain or showers swept across England and Wales over the next few days with the distribution varying day by day. At Odiham (Hampshire) 36.8 mm of rain was logged in the 24 hours to 1800 on the 2nd. Western and southern coasts were sunny on the 4th with 7.1 hours of sunshine recorded at Falmouth (Cornwall). The wind eased by the 5th as the low centre filled.

7th to 10th: A weak ridge of high pressure early on the 7th gave widespread frost and fog, and in parts of Kent and Sussex the fog lingered all day. Heavy rain reached the west later and some rain crossed all parts overnight. Trawscoed (Ceredigion) reported 28.4 mm in the 24 hours to 1800 on the 8th. Slack winds on the 9th allowed patchy fog and frost to develop with some dense and freezing fog in places. It was mild generally but cold in the south-east of England, where fog lingered all day in places. High pressure on the 10th gave a generally dry day with some sunshine in the south. It was exceptionally mild in parts of the west and a maximum of 13.5 °C was reached at Prestatyn (Denbighshire).

11th to 15th: High pressure was established to the south on the 11th giving westerly winds for most. Fog lingered all day in parts of the West Country and was loathe to clear in central parts of England. The temperature only reached 2.5 °C at Benson (Oxfordshire). A smoke plume from a big oil depot fire at Buncefield (Hertfordshire) affected London and parts of southern England on the 11th and 12th. A cold front spread south overnight and the next morning, lifting fog and low cloud from southern counties. A few showers followed in its wake over eastern England. High pressure then gave a couple of days of generally dry weather with variable cloud.

16th to 17th: A cold front brought some rain southwards on the 16th followed by northerly winds and some showers along western and east coast fringes. There was some hail in the east and a covering of snow in parts of Norfolk by dawn on the 17th. Hail and snow showers were frequent along the east coast of England as far as East Anglia on the 17th but many places were sunny. Wales and south-west England had some light rain. At Warcop Range (Cumbria) the temperature stayed below freezing all day.

18th to 20th: There was a weak ridge on the 18th and then a warm front spread into the west giving some heavy rain in places in the evening with this spreading across southern parts overnight but decaying as it did so. The 19th was dry and largely sunny but there were some showers over south-west England. There was some fog early and late. High pressure to the south on the 20th gave a widespread frost with some fog patches across more south-eastern parts. It was mainly dry and cloudy through the day.

21st to 24th: This period was typified by mild and mainly cloudy weather. There was some rain in places but more especially in northern parts. There was some sunshine on the 23rd over east Wales, the West Midlands and north-east England where it became very mild. Hawarden (Flintshire) had a maximum temperature of 13.1 °C on the 23rd. Some rain spread south on the 24th clearing the patchy fog in the south that had formed overnight.

25th to 29th: An anticyclone became established on the 25th and pressure remained relatively high for the next few days. There was some patchy rain on the 25th and later in the day showers moved into East Anglia. Some rain edged east on the 26th across England but petered out before it reached Wales. Sunny spells and showers followed in its wake and the showers turned wintry over Essex and Kent where the snow settled. It turned colder over the next couple of days with east to north-east winds across England and Wales. Further wintry showers affected eastern England from the Humber to East Sussex and across the Pennines on the 27th. There were reports of 10 cm of snow in Rye (East Sussex), 15 to 18 cm of snow around Folkestone (Kent). The following day, wintry showers continued in eastern coastal counties of England with 8 cm of snow reported in Ipswich (Suffolk), 10 cm in Lincolnshire and 15 cm in Northumberland. Western parts were largely sunny. The mornings of the 28th and 29th brought a locally-severe frost with minus 8.2 °C at Benson (Oxfordshire) on the 28th, -10.6 °C at Albemarle (Northumberland) and -9.2 °C at Hurn Airport (Dorset) on the morning of the 29th. Many places stayed below freezing on the 29th. At Durham the maximum was -3.9 °C and in central London the maximum to 2100 was just 0.9 °C. The showers in the east eventually petered out. Outbreaks of rain, sleet and snow spread into western parts in the afternoon and evening.

30th to 31st: Rain, sleet and snow spread east overnight and through the day followed by some heavy rain. The snow was last to clear from north-east England and at Redesdale (Northumberland) the maximum was just 0.4 °C, while several places reached 12 °C in south-west England. The snow caused some travel disruption with 200 vehicles stranded on the A1079 in East Yorkshire for a time. Many areas were milder on the 31st. There were showers in the west but some persistent fog in the north-east of England until dusk.

Scotland diary of highlights

After the first week, a large anticyclone was never far from Scotland, giving a dry month to much of the country. Mild weather from the Atlantic predominated, but cold weather from the east arrived to give a frosty Christmas week.

On the first two days low pressure moved south-east from the Atlantic to the English Channel. Mild and humid air of southerly origin covered Scotland and it was cloudy with outbreaks of rain.

The low pressure moved slowly across the North Sea between the 3rd and 6th, with light winds over Scotland veering from east to north. The weather was mostly cloudy but outbreaks of rain in the east were replaced by sunny periods in the west and south later.

Fronts from the Atlantic approached slowly from the south-west on the 7th and 8th. It was cloudy in the south-west with 30 mm of rain at Port Ellen on Islay on the 7th. It stayed fine in the north-east with the temperature falling to -6 °C at Altnaharra.

High pressure developed over Europe from the 9th to the 11th and warm and humid south-westerly winds covered Scotland. Maximum temperatures of 14 °C were reached somewhere on all three days and on the

11th minima of 11 °C were widely reported.

Between the 12th and 15th the anticyclone retreated west to the mid-Atlantic, and a north-westerly airstream affected Scotland. This brought mostly cloudy weather with outbreaks of rain to the north-west but some sunny intervals to the south-east. On the 14th winds gusted to 69 m.p.h. at Sella Ness on Shetland.

On the 16th and 17th winds of Arctic origin spread south across Scotland, bringing sunny periods to the south and wintry showers to the north. By the morning of the 18th the temperature had fallen to -9 °C at Aboyne.

A large anticyclone was centred over France from the 18th to the 24th and changeable, mostly mild and benign, westerly weather affected Scotland. However, winds gusted to 74 m.p.h. at Sella Ness on the 21st.

By Christmas Eve the anticyclone transferred to Scotland and then moved towards Siberia while maintaining a ridge to Scotland. Sunny weather with fog patches and night frost prevailed on Christmas Day. Between the 26th and 29th some snow showers affected the east but it remained fine in most places, although very cold with the temperature falling to -13 °C at Aviemore.

An Atlantic depression pushed fronts across the country on the 30th, accompanied by a period of snow and rain and followed by milder, showery conditions.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

Relatively mild but colder with some frost and fog around Christmas.

The month opened with some exceptionally wet weather, especially in eastern areas, and parts of Belfast were flooded on the morning of the 1st when 20 to 30 mm of rain fell widely in just 6 hours. At Castlereagh in east Belfast, the wettest area, 45 mm was recorded. The weather remained changeable but mostly mild during much of the first week with further rain at times.

Some colder nights developed and frost was widespread on the morning of the 7th but this cleared to leave another wet afternoon and evening with 15 to 20 mm in many areas and again up to 35 mm in parts of Co Down. This, however, proved to be the last significant rain for some time and much of the month up until the Christmas period was quiet and often relatively mild. Some sunny interludes occurred but a lot of cloud characterised the period and some night frosts returned again around the 17th and 18th. As high pressure developed for Christmas the weather turned cold and frosty with some persistent freezing fog patches in some areas on Christmas Day and Boxing Day. Outside of foggy areas, some very fine weather occurred with plenty of mid-winter sunshine. Overnight temperatures though were the lowest of the month, with inland areas seeing values widely down to between -3 and -5 °C.

The colder air departed for the end of the month, but not before a period of sleet and snow on the 29th with some lying snow temporarily in Fermanagh and Tyrone. Rainfall totals for this day ranged from 15 to 25 mm in many areas and another exceptionally heavy fall occurred in the Mournes with 65 mm at the Silent Valley Reservoir.

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